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It is a double pleasure to be here today.

First, I have long admired your great organization -- an organization dedicated to good land management. I have a deep interest in your program because I am a professional forester. I have spent most of my career in this field. Until recently, I was an Extension forester and a board member of the Michigan Forestry Association -- that State's major tree farm organization. So, I believe I have some understanding -- and a great deal of sympathy -- of the problems that you people have.

But the second reason for my pleasure in being here today is that it gives me an opportunity to discuss some of my plans for the forestry programs in the Department of Agriculture -- and I do have some definite plans and I need all the help and cooperation I can get from people like you to set them in motion.

This Administration has made a firm pledge to build a strong agriculture and a sound and effective forestry program. We have two broad guidelines:

1. To minimize Government interference in the affairs of individual owners and operators; and
2. To provide, when necessary, effective programs of assistance to achieve our objectives.

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Remarks by Dr. M. Rupert Cutler, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for Conservation, Research & Education, at the Forest Farmers Association meeting, New Orleans, Louisiana, June 2, 1977

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On this last point, President Carter gave special emphasis in his environmental message last week. He said:

"Since the passage in recent years of landmark legislation -- the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act, and the National Forest Management Act -- the greatest challenge remaining to American forestry is to improve the condition and production of small private forest holdings."

The message asked the Secretary of Agriculture to undertake a comprehensive study of cooperative forestry programs, to consider the need for measures to:

- Assure that forestry programs support National environmental goals;
- Assure that assistance to non-Federal forest owners will emphasize interdisciplinary planning and multiple-use management;
- Improve the capability of private forestlands to meet the Nation's need for wood;
- Prevent and control pollution, fires, and insects and diseases that damage forests, using environmentally sound methods, such as biological pest controls;
- Improve and maintain fish and wildlife habitats, particularly those that are critical for threatened and endangered species;
- Strengthen planning and management capabilities of State and local forestry agencies;
- And, examine the desirability of providing financial assistance to State forestry agencies on the basis of State forestry plans rather than the present fragmented approach.



We can dramatically increase productivity of both public and private lands, for timber and other resource uses -- and I am committed to that effort.

We want USDA agencies to be broadly involved in the natural resource issues which face us. The complexities of land use potentials demand that we move away from the narrow considerations of commodity production only. We must keep aware of what other Federal, State, and local agencies are doing. We recognize that better planning and coordination of programs are needed. And, our Departmental programs must be designed to provide maximum assistance and to assure long-term benefits for both the landowner and the Nation.

This is our present situation and our hope for the future.

Now, the question is, how do we get from here to there? I think there are five major areas on which we need to concentrate to make the most of this tremendous potential that exists on this Nation's private nonindustrial forestlands:

1. We must intensify management on these lands.
2. We must create a coordinated harmony of public and private lands, letting each ownership produce what it produces best.
3. We need to strengthen -- and perhaps consolidate -- Federal authorities to assist private landowners.
4. We need a strong Federal extension program to help reach all private ownerships.
5. And, we need to have authority to extend manpower programs to private lands.

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Intensify Management on Private Nonindustrial Forests

For years, we've talked about intensifying management on woodlands.

You've heard the figures on potential before, but I think their sheer magnitude cannot be stressed enough. Fifty-nine percent of this Nation's commercial forestland is owned by small, private nonindustrial interests -- 296 million acres. Yet, this preponderance of land produces only a fraction of the Nation's requirements.

For just a moment, let's take this even beyond the perspective of timberlands, commercial or otherwise -- this land area is almost 13 percent of the total U.S. landbase, including cities, highways, surface water -- everything.

I hear a lot of talk about wilderness designation taking away from the commercial timberbase. And yet, the commercial timberlands held by private non-industrial owners are more than 20 times the area of the total wilderness system.

There is no question that there will be great future demands for forest products. We are seeing a sharp upturn in housing, and the best forecasters indicate that it will continue.

Projections of national needs indicate that wood consumption will climb from about 13 billion cubic feet in 1970 to almost 23 billion cubic feet in the year 2000. This represents nearly an 80 percent increase in total consumption; and when translated to regional potentials, it means that the South must double its harvest. And, when we talk about doubling production in the South, we must look to improve management to nonindustrial private ownerships. The challenge is here. The Nation is depending on forest farmers and other small landowners to respond.

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I might add that these projections do not fully take into account what may become a tremendous push to have wood help meet the Nation's energy requirements. Already we are hearing talk of having "energy plantations" produce renewable sources of energy. And when you look at what the pulp industry has done to utilize residues for fuel, the concept of energy plantations is very real and immediate.

#### Harmony of Public and Private Land

Too often in the past, we've looked to the Federal forest lands to meet too many of our resource needs. Recently there has been considerable discussion about the multiple-use role of the Federal lands and how much timber should be produced on them. I think we should start by recognizing that there are some public needs which private lands just can't meet very well -- for example, wilderness and dispersed recreation. But there is a trade-off opportunity and that is to assist and encourage private landowners to produce from their lands what they can produce best -- and that is timber. This then frees the Federal lands to produce benefits which are not economically feasible on private lands.

In the East -- and more particularly, in the South -- private lands represent the majority of the total acreage. They consist of good sites; they are easily accessible; and, here in the South, they can produce excellent species on relatively short rotations. In short, these lands can best grow timber for the consumer. Let's keep in mind that in growing trees for harvest, we are providing the consuming public with the materials and products that make our standard of living so high.

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If we can increase yield from a substantial portion of our private timberlands, we can continue to meet our goal of providing adequate supplies of timber at relatively constant prices.

#### Strengthen Federal S&PF Authorities

Additional authorities may be needed to create more effective programs of forestry incentives and technical assistance. Some members of Congress have shown interest in considering updated State and private forestry legislation comparable in scope to the National Forest Management Act and the Resources Planning Act.

#### Fully Utilize Extension Opportunities

You forest farmers already have made strides in land management, but this knowledge and initiative should be passed on to other owners. We must reach and educate the millions of people who own forestlands. This includes those who are not here today, and who are not even members of associations such as the Forest Farmers. This is a recognized major problem.

The Department of Agriculture, through its several agencies concerned with forestry, will be strengthening its delivery system for forestry technical assistance, education, and financial incentives. We want to provide truly effective support for any interested private landowner. The Department always has been strongly committed to that goal. But, we also are committed to meeting the consumer's needs as effectively as possible. In the case of forestry, these goals are not only compatible, but are highly complementary.

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Helping you to improve management of your lands helps the consumer by making more and better forest products available to him. I am stressing cooperation and joint efforts by USDA forestry-related agencies, and I will make every effort to see that we provide a unified, coordinated package of assistance at the county level.

I have directed the Forest Service, Extension Service, Soil Conservation Service, and Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service to jointly examine their forestry assistance programs and recommend to me how they can be improved.

I will follow through with every possible means to achieve a team effort, especially when working with our counterparts in the States and local communities. There will be no competition among USDA agencies as to who serves the landowner -- only a common concern that he be served, and in an effective way. USDA agencies will build cooperative programs which complement each other, and which maximize individual agency contributions.

#### Authority to Extend Manpower Programs

One form of assistance that intrigues me is the possibility of extending Federal manpower programs, such as the Young Adult Conservation Corps program, to private lands. That would require some new authorities in order to do planting, pruning and other silvicultural work with Corps members on private land.

Some would say that such a program satisfies three national goals at the same time. It would help the unemployed. It would help the forest owner. And, it would help the consuming public, in terms of environmental quality improvement and, ultimately, timber supplies.

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But, whatever approach or combination of approaches we take, public agencies must never lose sight of the individual landowner's situation and his management objectives. We must be prepared to start with a multiple-use approach, and then adjust it to meet the owner's desires.

An owner can have a primary objective such as recreation or wildlife and, at the same time, with modest adjustments in management, he can reap multiple benefits including timber and pulp production. The point is to get our forestland managed.

Well-managed forests mean good stands of desirable species kept vigorous to reduce risks from insects and diseases, protected from wildfire, harvested with care, with soil productivity protected and enhanced, with clean water, abundant fish and wildlife, and a place to be alone with nature. Such a forest is not a dream -- it is a reality when there is good stewardship.

But good stewardship is a team effort. The Department of Agriculture should continue to be able to provide the Forestry Improvement Program, the Agricultural Conservation Program, and other incentives to help owners finance the costs of improving land management. We will need the help of consultants to draw up plans, and of vendors of services to convert plans into accomplishments.

Industry, too, has a role in landowner assistance programs, by providing services and markets for the timber harvested. But most of all, good stewardship depends on the landowner. Even with all of us pulling together, we will still have a tough time realizing the potential of private lands. Working together is our only hope of getting the job done.

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There already are a number of other Federal and State programs which affect forest management. We in USDA are concerned about these programs and regulations. We are working with the agencies involved to represent or consider the interests of farmers and forest landowners. We also are helping the States and others to plan and to comply with the various Federal and State regulations, especially those which protect our environment and establish standards for soil productivity and water and air quality. Some of these laws place the primary responsibility with the State, such as 208 Planning and Coastal Zone Management. We must be ready to help the States and local governments do the best possible job of land-use planning, through providing information on soil types and other technical data needed by State and local planners and other citizens.

We also must encourage the states to protect our prime agricultural and forest lands -- lands which are being allocated at an alarming rate to uses that make them virtually irretrievable. We must retain these lands in their prime condition to meet future world needs for food and fiber.

The Department has embarked upon a program to identify prime farmlands and help to retain them in agriculture. The Soil Conservation Service has the leadership for this program and already has begun to publish maps which show prime agricultural lands in key counties across the country. We can no longer afford to pave over our most productive lands to develop suburbs and factories. These lands must be protected -- they are the base for an increasing portion of the world's food supply.

And this nation's prime forest lands are just as important. The Forest Service is cooperating with the Soil Conservation Service and the USDA Land Use Committee to define and identify prime forest lands for timber production. You will be hearing more about this in the future.

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I'm equally sure you'll be hearing about new initiatives on National Forest System lands, including wilderness-designation proposals. In recent testimony, I informed Congress that USDA is going to move more rapidly to identify those National Forest lands which should be added to the wilderness system, and to free the roadless areas which will not be so designated, so that they can serve other purposes.

We have an opportunity to include in the Wilderness System lands which are not entirely free of "marks of mankind." We will look openly at the features or uses traditionally considered nonconforming. We will be more innovative in "managing around" objectionable features to minimize their impacts. This is particularly important in the East.

In wilderness designation and all other issues, there will be plenty of opportunity for public involvement. The Forest Service is now working on a new assessment of all the Nation's renewable resources, under the Resources Planning Act. This will lead to a new program of Forest Service activities, to be presented by the Administration to Congress in January, 1980. The 1975 Assessment and Program were the first long-range efforts to set national goals for forestry and to provide a program of Forest Service activities to help achieve those goals. We expect Congress to begin oversight hearings this summer to help set direction for the 1980 program. I urge you to participate and express the needs of this Nation's private forest owners. We need your help to determine the balance of uses that will be adopted on Federal lands and encouraged on private lands.

The National Forest Management Act of 1976 also offers many opportunities for public involvement. Please take advantage of each and every one of these opportunities.

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But, most of all, keep up the fine record of achievement you've established over the years. The Department of Agriculture applauds your efforts. Your encouragement and support of good forest land management strengthens the Nation. Private nonindustrial forest lands have a great part to play in this Nation's resource future. And you have a great part to play in determining what that future should be -- and what it will be.

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